

## **Boko Haram**

**Boko Haram**

**is a**

terrorist

**organization that supports**

Muslim

**extremists in**

Nigeria

**. The group aims to rid Nigeria of Western influence—that is, the influence of Europe and the Americas—and create a new independent**

Islamic

**state. Since 2009, Boko Haram has been in open rebellion against the Nigerian government. The group has conducted attacks from motorcycles, as well as suicide bombings, kidnappings, and mass raids. Boko Haram has been blamed for thousands of deaths.**

**In the**

Hausa

**language of Nigeria,**

*Boko Haram*

**loosely means**

*Western education is forbidden.*

**The group is also known as**

*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wai-Jihad,*

**Arabic for**

*People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad.*

**The Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf formed Boko Haram in 2002. He based it in Maiduguri, the capital of the Nigerian state of Borno. Maiduguri had been plagued by religious violence since the 1960's. Yusuf built a mosque and a religious school dedicated to Boko Haram's brand of**

Sunni



**Islam. The group claims to support**

Shari`ah

**, the legal and moral code of Islam.**

**Boko Haram forbids**

*secular*

**(nonreligious)**

education

**and the wearing of Western-style**

clothing

**. They also condemn such “Western” activities as**

voting

**in elections. The group has thrived in areas of northeastern Nigeria that have struggled with poverty and corrupt administration. Most of the original Boko Haram followers were Kanuri, an ethnic group in northeastern Nigeria. However, Boko Haram includes several separate factions. It has also revealed growing influence from other terrorist organizations.**

During the first decade of the 2000's, Boko Haram increased both its numbers and its militancy. In July 2009, Nigerian security forces attempted to disarm the group, leading to battles that killed more than 800 people. The violence ended with Mohammed Yusuf's capture and execution.

**Boko Haram reemerged in 2010 under the leadership of Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau. The group has since staged a number of attacks and bombings. The violence has spread from northeastern Nigeria to**

Abuja

**, Nigeria's capital, and other cities. Boko Haram targets Christians and moderate Muslims, as well as Nigerian police, politicians, teachers, and others.**

In late 2011, Boko Haram violence led Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency in the states of Borno, Niger, Plateau, and Yobe. In May 2013, a state of emergency was again declared in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. In April 2014, Boko Haram's abduction of more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls attracted international attention and widespread condemnation. Boko Haram attacks then intensified in Nigeria as well as in neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Early in 2015, the four nations formed a military coalition against Boko Haram, whose recent attacks had destroyed entire towns and killed hundreds of people.



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